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Who am I? Identity Portfolio

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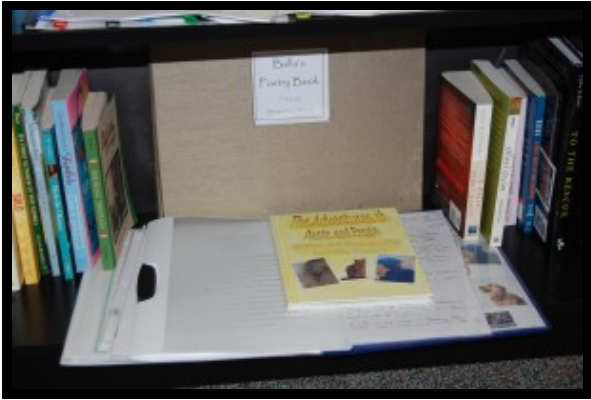
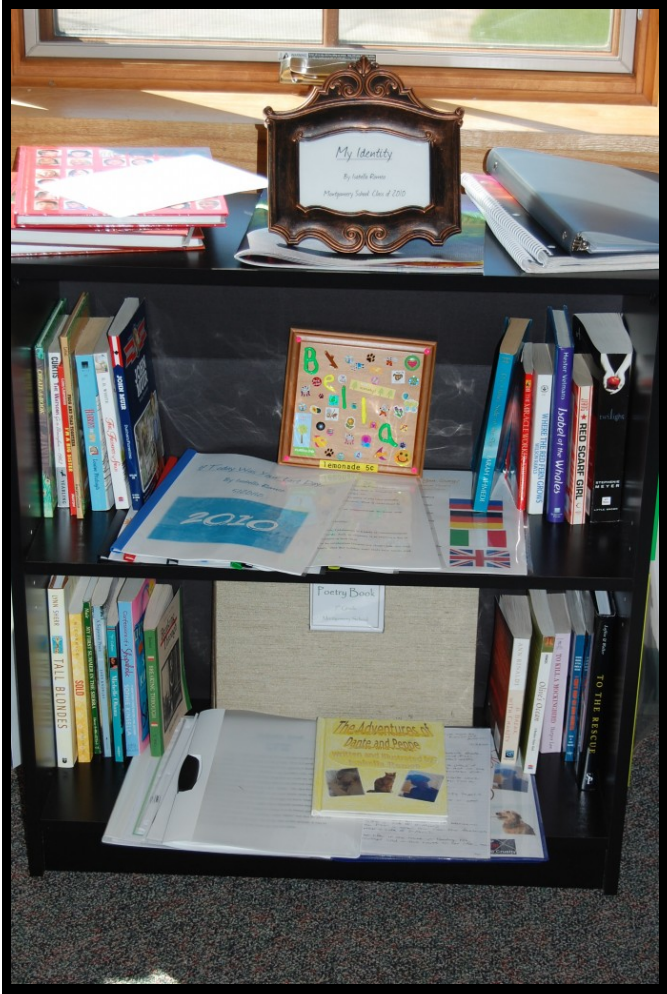
The theme for 8th grade is simply: identity. Students explore identity through forgiveness and justice, immigration, and making a difference. Each novel, poem, short story, and writing piece is carefully chosen with identity in mind. The assignments were designed to make them question who they are and what they stand for. This year, I had my students create an identity portfolio from all of their writing pieces. Why? Because later in life they will be able to look back and reflect on who they were in 8th

grade...because sometimes we forget...

The following pieces were included in their identity portfolios:

- **Bio Poem:** A fun reflection in prose.
- **Forgiveness Personal Narrative:** After reading *The Sunflower* by Simon Weisenthal, students question their ability to forgive. They reflect on a time when they had to forgive someone or someone had to forgive them in a personal narrative.
- **I'm From Poem:** This poem is based on George Ella Lyon's piece. Students create their own poems, a collective poem, and a digital story based on it found [here](#).
- **What's Your Story?:** A creative writing project in which students designed a 3 dimensional object reflecting all of their heritages along with a story of how it came to be.
- **This I Believe:** A personal belief statement essay in 350-500 words. Click [here](#) to view the entire project.
- **Six Words:** Students were challenged to create a story in [six words](#) using a visual and words.
- **Make a Difference Project Personal Reflective Paper:** A reflection piece about their [year long project](#).
- **One Thing Photo Essay:** In a photo essay, students were asked to be photographed with the [one thing](#) they value most.
- **Bucket List:** Students created a list of 50 things they would like to accomplish before their time is up.
- **Memory Letter:** Students wrote a heart felt letter to someone that is important to them with specific memories tied to it.
- **Graduation Speech:** Each student wrote a [graduation speech](#) to reflect on their years at Montgomery.

Students had the option of presenting their portfolio any way that they wanted in order to reflect their own personal identity and personalities. I had scrapbooks, boxes, handmade books, binders, suitcases, and even an entire bookshelf of work created and written over the past three years with me. These projects overwhelmed me. When you see all that a student has accomplished within a year, how they have progressed, and what they have discovered about themselves is a humbling experience. Many tears were shed as I flipped through each page. I thought I knew these kids, but I learned something new about each and every student. This was the first year that I did this portfolio project, and I honestly think it is one of the most important things that they have done for me all year. I hope that they will dig into their closets years from now and discover who they were in 2010, what their hopes and dreams for the future were, and are reminded of that amazing time in life when they asked themselves on a daily basis: *Who am I?*



Tags: [identity](#) · [reflection](#) · [writing](#)

26 Comments so far ↓



- **Kyle Wood** // [Jun 9, 2010 at 4:41 pm](#)

I really love this. It is like all of the individual reflective projects I have seen mashed up into a super cool project. 😊

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- **A fabulous blog | techno6** // [Jun 10, 2010 at 3:47 am](#)

[...] Who am I – Identity – a really interesting blog with some great ideas. Check it out. [...]

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- **Holly A** // [Jul 2, 2010 at 4:53 pm](#)

This work is amazing. These types of projects are exactly what are kids need to motivate themselves to learn. I would love to see how you lay this out throughout the year—would you be willing to share?

I teach 6th grade but I can see this being very adaptable to all middle school grades.

Great Work

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- **Jennifer** // [Aug 2, 2010 at 11:14 pm](#)

I found your site at the end of this past school year and have been searching it all summer. I will be teaching 8th grade writing this year and love this idea. I usually have my 8th graders complete a time capsule of sorts but it doesn't even begin to compare to this project. I would like to center my entire year around the theme of identity and this unit. Is there any other information you could provide me with that would help in my planning process? I also want to have my 7th graders complete your biography project.

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- **mrspall** // [Aug 3, 2010 at 7:20 am](#)

Hi Jennifer.

Thanks for your interest in my projects! I'd be happy to email you a few things to help get you started! I think you'll find that the theme of identity is ideal to use with 8th graders. They are really beginning to question who they are and what their purpose in life is at 13. You'll be surprised how much you'll be able to get out of them when you focus on identity. Best of luck with the upcoming school year and new focus!

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- **kristenk** // [Jan 29, 2012 at 4:41 pm](#)

Hi Megan,

I am a grade 7 ELA teacher and am doing a unit with my students on Identity. I think that an identity portfolio is a perfect way to capture this. Could you send me some stuff as well.


Thanks!

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-  [mrsall](#) // [Jan 29, 2012 at 8:04 pm](#)

Sure thing, Kristen. I shared a google doc folder with you.

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-  [Aki](#) // [Aug 14, 2010 at 8:24 pm](#)

What a wonderful idea! Thank you for sharing. I've also been working on a diversity themed project this summer that I hope will jump start great conversations about diversity, identity, and respect:

<http://diversitydownload.blogspot.com/>

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-  [mrsall](#) // [Aug 14, 2010 at 8:30 pm](#)

Thanks for stopping by Aki! Please keep me posted on your project...I've just added your blog to my reader.

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-  [Jennifer](#) // [Aug 15, 2010 at 11:16 am](#)

Thanks for offering your information. Can you also send information on the biography project? I haven't noticed an email yet and am wondering if I need to give it to you as a post? If so it is jbennett0925@gmail.com If you sent something, it has been lost in my spam or I deleted it by accident. Again, thank you in advance. I am so excited to do both projects with my students.

P.S. I recommended your advisory website to our new school counselor yesterday because I was so impressed with it, and our character ed program really needs some improvement.

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-  [mrsall](#) // [Aug 15, 2010 at 11:43 am](#)

Hey Jennifer.

I shared both my folders via google docs...let me know if you got them.

I'm so glad that you shared my advisory blog! I think more and more schools are ditching advisory programs because they don't know what to do with them.

Let me know if you need anything else. You can email me directly at meganpalevich@gmail.com

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-  **Kelly Shoup-Hill** // [Aug 21, 2010 at 4:41 pm](#)

This is a terrific idea. At Goshen Middle School we do a multi-genre project which is very similar but the idea of students finding/exploring their identity makes the project much more appealing. I am going to pass on your website to all the English teachers at my school.

Thanks

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-  **mrspal1** // [Aug 21, 2010 at 5:22 pm](#)

Thanks for stopping by, Kelly.
I appreciate you sharing my blog with your colleagues.
Have a great day! 😊 Megan

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-  **justgreene** // [Oct 7, 2010 at 10:39 pm](#)

I just came across your site and found your Who Am I project to be exactly what I am looking for. I teach 6th grade LA and am working on themes of identity with my students. I was hoping you could share the groundwork for this project with me. Here is my email: jgreene@psd202.org

I would also love to see the biography project as well. That is one of our required units in 6th grade and I love how you incorporated all the writing styles.

I look forward to seeing what else you come up with. This is a great site and I plan to share with my colleagues.
Thanks.

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-  **Heather Hollands** // [Feb 10, 2011 at 9:09 am](#)

Hi Megan,

I teach 10th grade English in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I stumbled across your students' Three Words to the World videos on your wiki. I showed my students, and they LOVED them, and cannot wait to get started on their own. If you have any lesson plans/handouts that you would be interested in sharing with us, I would so greatly appreciate it. No need to reinvent the wheel when you obviously have done a great job with this! Please tell your students how much we enjoyed their work. Thanks so much!

Heather Hollands, hholland@gwinn.k12.mi.us

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-  **mrspal1** // [Feb 10, 2011 at 10:42 am](#)

Hi Heather.

I had gotten the idea from ABC here: <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Your3Words/> Basically, the kids discussed what three words they would say to the world if they only had three. They drafted their sentences, then decided how they were going to present the three words in a creative way. From then, we decided as a class how we

would sequence them and filmed them with a flip cam. I used the flip cam editing software to put all of the videos together and set it to music. It only took 2 class periods and the kids loved it! Thanks for your interest! 😊)
Megan

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-  [Identity portfolios « Differentiation Daily](#) // [Mar 28, 2011 at 10:05 am](#)


[...] they “know and can do”. This one featured on Megan Palevich’s impressive site, Middle School 101, is sure to give you a lot of information about your students and about their knowledge and skills [...]

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-  [jordanjh](#) // [Sep 1, 2011 at 9:33 pm](#)

Hi Megan! I am teaching 8th grade Humanities and my framework questions are Who Am I and Who am I as an American? I would love any ideas (from anyone!) on novels, short stories, poems to use to complement an American History (through the Civil War) curriculum that could also relate to identity! THANKS!

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-  [jordanjh](#) // [Sep 1, 2011 at 9:33 pm](#)

Also, I LOVE THIS IDEA! Forgot to mention that 😊

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-  [kristenk](#) // [Feb 6, 2012 at 2:32 pm](#)

Hello again Megan,


I am going to start a Bucket List project with my grade 7's. I am curious how you got your students to start thinking about their hopes and dreams. I find this to be a hard concept with middle schoolers. Any advice??

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-  [Meet Me in the Middle](#) // [Feb 20, 2012 at 8:52 am](#)

[...] I’ve been wondering why. I do ask my students to write about their hopes and dreams, their identity, where they are from, what they believe, who makes a difference to them, and I push them to think [...]

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-  [mpd72](#) // [May 31, 2012 at 1:04 pm](#)

Hi Megan,

I am also a 7th grade ELA teacher and I love your idea. We have changed our curriculum this year and identity is one of the themes. Could you please send me more information on this project?

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-  **cooksclass16** // [Jun 8, 2012 at 7:52 pm](#)

Hi Megan,

I am going to be a first year teacher this fall. I will have 6th grade Pre-AP Reading, Pre-AP English, and Pre-AP Social Studies. The whole identity project and all of its components are exactly the kind of things I would like to implement! I had already stumbled upon the This i Believe idea awhile back, but I love how you have tied everything together. Would you mind sharing any of your folders with me? Do you think 6th graders will be ready to delve into such a topic or would you recommend any changes to the curriculum theme?

I look forward to hearing from you!

-Riley (rileylynn@gmail.com)

[Log in to Reply](#)

-  **kbice88** // [Aug 13, 2012 at 1:02 pm](#)

Hi Megan!

I am so excited that I found your blog. You have such amazing ideas, and the best thing is that they are shaped just the way I would shape my own 8th grade ideas.

This will be my second year of teaching and I had already planned on having the students create a multigenre paper that defines themselves, but I was having a hard time figuring out how to go about it. Would you be willing to share any materials on this wonderful "Who Am I? Portfolio" with me? I would be forever grateful!

- Kate (kate.bice.88@gmail.com)

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-  **msjennaharris** // [Aug 15, 2012 at 8:39 pm](#)

Hi! I am a brand new teacher in my second week of teaching 7th and 8th grade writing in the Mississippi Delta. I LOVE this idea and would love to incorporate it into my class' narrative unit we're working on. Could you please send me any materials? My email is jlharris08@msn.com. I already implemented some of the things I found in another post you have with the video narratives, and we're going to try those out, too. Thank you so much 😊

Jenna

[Log in to Reply](#)

-  **spower74** // [Aug 27, 2012 at 10:21 pm](#)

Hi Megan! This is such a wonderful project and it is exactly what I have been looking for. Your ideas are incredibly creative and motivating. I teach grade 8 and I would love to try this project with my students. Would you be willing to share anything you think would be helpful? Thanks!!!!

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You must [log in](#) to post a comment.

• About me...

Hi...I'm Megan Palevich and I've been an educator for 18 years and am inspired every day by the students I teach. I am constantly seeking out meaningful and innovative ways to teach students to be better people and life-long learners, and how to inspire other teachers to do the same.

Please note that the content of this blog is my own. It does not reflect the opinions of my employer.



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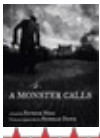
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[Wonder](#)

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This is an amazing story about kindness and meanness...in the end, the lesson is to always be "kinder than". Auggie is a wonder. An absolute must read!



[A Monster Calls](#)

by [Patrick Ness](#)

This is one of those books that stays with you. I need to fully digest it before writing about it...incredibly well written.

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